Department of State

TELEGRAM

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EXCISE E

Saigon 2971 8-1-67

PAGE 01 SAIGON 02971 111439Z

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ACTION EA 19

INFO GPM 03 SC 01 RSC 01 USIA 12 H 02 NSC 10 NSA 02 L 03 INR 07 P 04
CIA 04 DOD 01 SP 02 SS 35 AID 30 IO 21 SAL 01 SAH 02 RSR 01
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R 121400Z AUG 67
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4495
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 3765
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE 2140
AMCONSUL DANANG 718
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 2971

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

1. AFTERNOON AUGUST 12, IN RESPONSE TO TELEPHONE INVITATION, EMBOFF TALKED WITH LEADING TRI QUANG SUPPORTER [redacted] AT BUDDHIST YOUTH HEADQUARTERS ON CONG LY STREET. b-1 e d

2. [redacted] SAID PRESS CONFERENCE WILL BE HELD AUGUST 14 AT AN QUANG PAGODA DURING WHICH "BUDDHIST" POSITION TOWARD SEPTEMBER ELECTION WILL BE SET FORTH. ACCORDING TO [redacted] AN QUANG BUDDHISTS WILL ANNOUNCE THAT UNLESS THERE ARE "CHANGES" INDICATING GREATER POSSIBILITY OF A FREE AND FAIR ELECTION BUDDHISTS WILL NOT RPT NOT PARTICIPATE. [redacted] MENTIONED CONGRESSIONAL OPPOSITION IN U.S. TO COURSE VIETNAMESE b-1 e d

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PAGE 02 SAIGON 02971 C O N F I D E N T I A L
ELECTIO SEEM TO BE TAKING). HOWEVER, BEFORE HOLDING PRESS CONFERENCE, AN QUANG BUDDHISTS WANTED TO KNOW ATTITUDE OF AMERICAN EMBASSY TOWARD THE ELECTIONS.

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PAGE 02 SAIGON 02971 111439Z

3. EMBOFF SAID THAT AMERICAN EMBASSY HOPES FOR FREE AND FAIR ELECTION IN SEPTEMBER, AS AMBASSADOR HAS PUBLICLY STATED SEVERAL TIMES. WE HAVE EVERY INDICATION THAT ELECTION WILL IN FACT BE CLEAN AND FREE. WE HOPE CANDIDATES WILL SOON TAKE TO CAMPAIGN TRAIL AGAIN, AND THAT ALL ELEMENTS OF VIETNAMESE SOCIETY WILL PARTICIPATE IN ELECTION.

4. [ ] SAID IT IS VERY UNLIKELY THAT ELECTION WILL BE FAIR. THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO CHEAT IN AN ELECTION, AND VIETNAMESE ARE EXPERTS AT CHEATING. BALLOT BOXES COULD BE TAMPERED WITH FOR EXAMPLE, OR BALLOTS OF NONEXISTENT VOTERS COULD BE COUNTED. EMBOFF POINTED OUT THAT ELECTION LAW PROVIDES VERY STRICT GUARANTEES AGAINST ELECTION FRAUD. THIEN MINH ADMITTED HE HAS NOT READ IT, AND SAID HE WOULD DO SO.

5. WHEN ASKED WHAT SORT OF "CHANGES" WOULD BE REQUIRED FOR AN QUANG BUDDHISTS TO PARTICIPATE IN ELECTION,

PAGE 3 RUMJIR 2971 C O N F I D E N T I A L
INDICATED THAT FOREMOST NEED IS FOR THIEU AND KY TO TAKE LEAVE FROM THEIR GOVERNMENT POSITIONS. AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT, PERHAPS HEADED BY GENERAL CAO VAN VIEN OR GENERAL NGUYEN DUC THANG, WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE. AS LONG AS THIEU AND KY HOLD POWER, THERE CANNOT BE A JUST ELECTION. ANTICS OF GENERAL LOAN AND DISQUALIFICATION OF BUDDHIST UPPER HOUSE SLATES ARE AMPLE EVIDENCE THAT ELECTION WILL NOT BE FAIR. SUGGESTED THAT AMERICANS BRING PRESSURE ON THIEU AND KY TO RESIGN. EMBOFF REPLIED THAT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY APPROVED CANDIDACIES OF THIEU AND KY, RULING THAT THEY ARE NOT REQUIRED TO TAKE LEAVE, AND ADDED THAT THEIR INCUMBENCY DOES NOT MEAN ELECTION WILL BE UNFAIR. EMBOFF NOTED IMPORTANCE OF SEPTEMBER ELECTIONS FOR VIET-NAM, AND IMPORTANCE OF WIDE PARTICIPATION IN THEM. [ ] WAS THOROUGHLY UNCONVINCED.

6. AN ADDITIONAL MATTER [ ] WISHED TO DISCUSS WAS DIFFICULTY TRI QUANG HAS HAD IN MAINTAINING CONTACT WITH AMERICAN EMBASSY. EMBOFF REPLIED THAT HE AND OTHER EMBOFFS ARE ALWAYS AVAILABLE TO TALK TO TRI QUANG, AND

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PAGE 03 SAIGON 02971 111439Z

CAN EASILY BE REACHED BY TELEPHONE, AS TRI QUANG KNOWS.
THEN SAID THAT HE AND TRI QUANG WOULD LIKE TO

PAGE 4 RUMJIR 2971 C O N F I D E N T I A L
INVITE AMBASSADOR BUNKER, AMBASSADOR KOMER AND POLITICAL COUNSELOR TO DINNER, IF POSSIBLE ON EVENING OF AUGUST 13 BEFORE AUGUST 14 PRESS CONFERENCE. EMBOFF PROMISED TO RELAY INVITATION, BUT NOTED THAT SCHEDULE OF AMBASSADORS AND POLITICAL COUNSELOR ARE QUITE FULL.

7. COMMENT: A) AN QUANG CLIQUE HAS APPARENTLY DECIDED THAT NOW IS TIME TO ADD THEIR VOICE TO THOSE CRYING FOUL. IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT THE AN QUANG CALL FOR A BOYCOTT OF THE ELECTIONS WOULD, AS IN 1966, FOLLOW PRECISELY THE VIET CONG LINE. IT WOULD ALSO COME CLOSE ON THE HEELS OF THE LATEST VC BOYCOTT CALL.

B) AMBASSADORS AND POLITICAL COUNSELOR WERE UNABLE TO ACCEPT TRI QUANG'S INVITATION FOR AUGUST 13.

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